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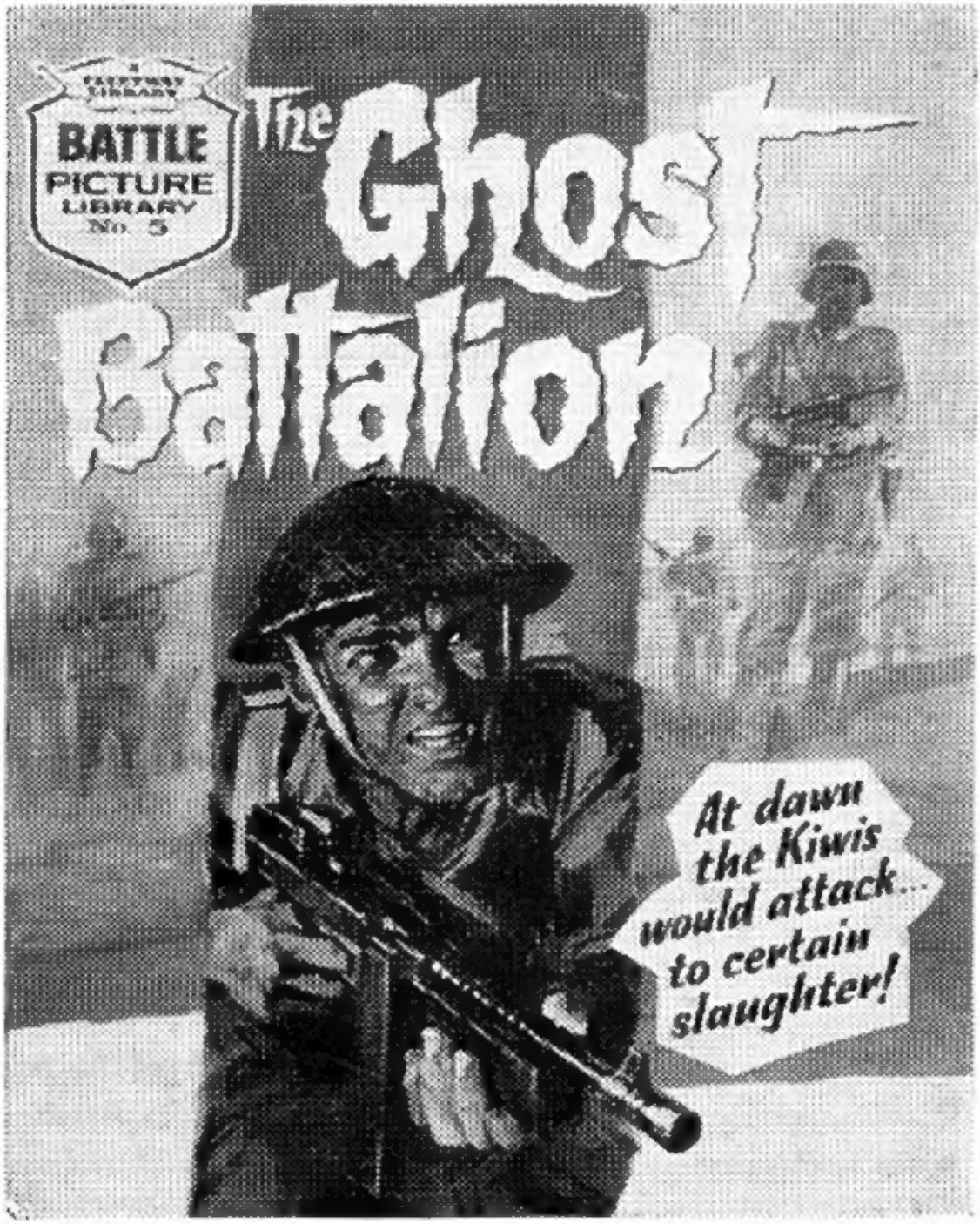

TWO Dramatic, All-action Issues Every Month

BLITZKRIEG!

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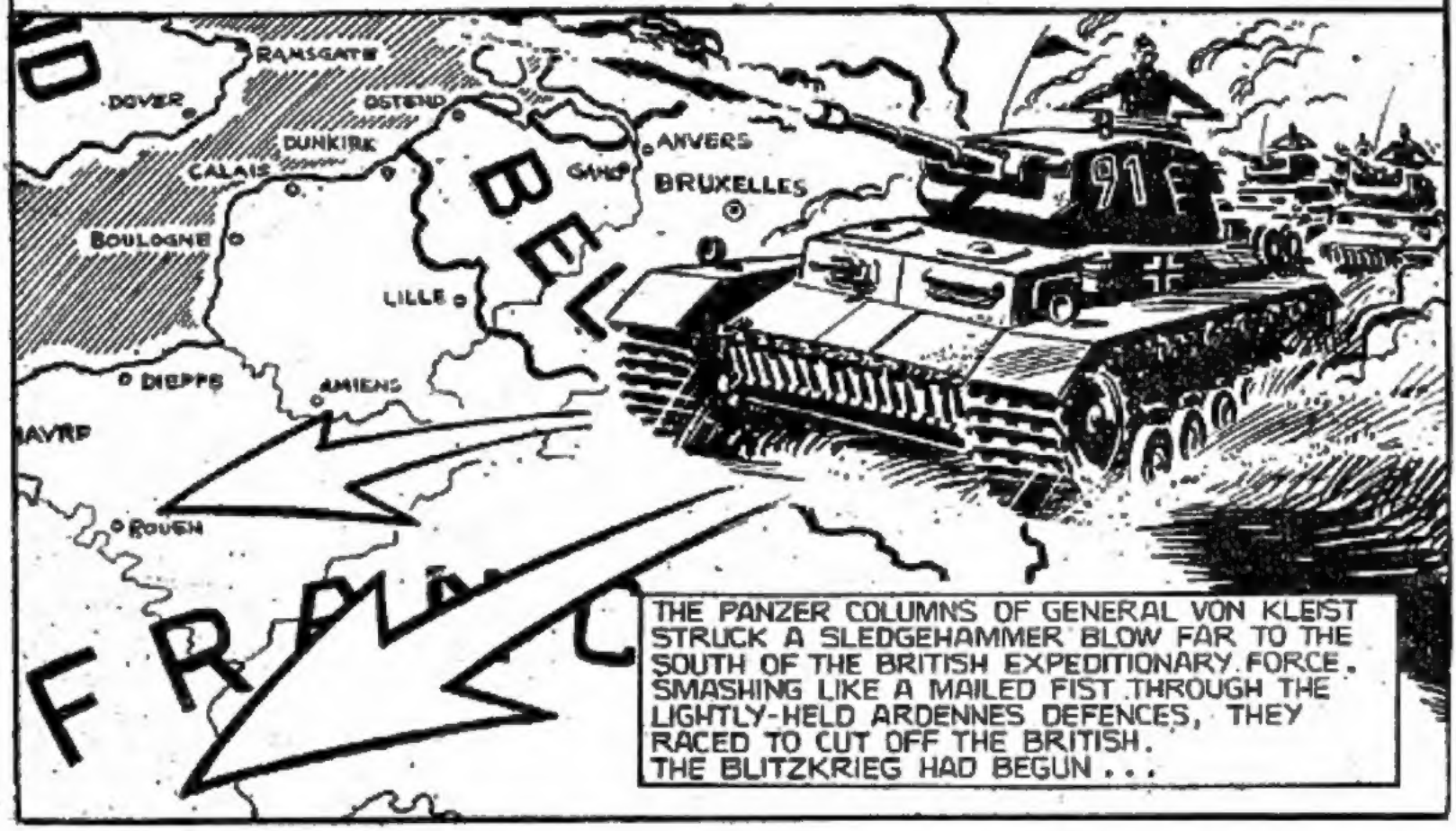
Chapter 1. BACKS to the SEA



THE PANZER COLUMNS OF GENERAL VON KLEIST STRUCK A SLEDGEHAMMER BLOW FAR TO THE SOUTH OF THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE. SMASHING LIKE A MAILED FIST THROUGH THE LIGHTLY-HELD ARDENNES DEFENCES, THEY RACED TO CUT OFF THE BRITISH. THE BLITZKRIEG HAD BEGUN . . .

THE *FALL GELB* — OR PLAN YELLOW — OF ADOLF HITLER'S HIGH COMMAND HAD SUCCEEDED BRILLIANTLY. REELING BEFORE THE GERMAN ARMOURED ONSLAUGHT. THE FRENCH FELL BACK AND THE BELGIANS CAPITULATED. THE BRITISH ARMY FOUND ITSELF TRAPPED ON FOREIGN SOIL.

IT'S NO GOOD FACING THAT WAY, MATES! THE JERRIES ARE BEHIND YOU!

RETREAT, EH?

AS OFTEN BEFORE IN THE PERILOUS MOMENTS OF ITS LONG AND BLOODSOAKED HISTORY, THE BRITISH ARMY PUT ITS BACK TO THE SEA AND FACED THE ENEMY. IF THE GERMAN HORDES COULD BE HELD OFF LONG ENOUGH, ONE SLENDER PATH OF ESCAPE WAS STILL OPEN...
IF WE GIVE IN NOW, GENTLEMEN, BRITAIN WILL BE WITHOUT AN ARMY AND THE WAR WILL BE LOST! WE MUST FIGHT OUR WAY BACK TO THE COAST, ESTABLISH A PERIMETER, AND TRY TO EVACUATE OUR TROOPS FROM THIS PORT...
DUNKIRK?!

ONCE AN ANCIENT HARBOUR BUILT IN THE SAND DUNES BORDERING THE ENGLISH CHANNEL, DUNKIRK WAS ABOUT TO WRITE ITS NAME IN LETTERS OF BLOOD ACROSS THE PAGES OF BRITAIN'S PROUD HISTORY. ALREADY THE BOMBING HAD BEGUN...

FIFTY MILES AWAY ACROSS THE CHANNEL, IN THE DEEP GALLERIES OF THE EAST CLIFF BELOW DOVER CASTLE, THE ROYAL NAVY WAS SETTING IN MOTION OPERATION DYNAMO — THE RESCUE OF THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE FROM DUNKIRK. FROM DOVER, ON SUNDAY, 26th MAY, AN ARMADA SET SAIL...

IT WAS A MOTLEY FLEET... BUT IT WAS ABOUT TO FIGHT ONE OF THE MOST VITAL SEA BATTLES IN BRITISH HISTORY...

OVER THE FRENCH COAST, CLOUDS OF GERMAN STUKAS WERE GATHERING LIKE VULTURES FOR THE SLAUGHTER . . .
SCHWARZFUEHRER FROM SHARK LEADER! I AM GOING IN FOR THE KILL! HEIL HITLER!

DOWN BELOW, IN THE CROWDED STREETS OF DUNKIRK, THE FIRST OF THE THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND SOLDIERS OF THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE HAD REACHED THE BLAZING GATEWAY TO FREEDOM . . .
ANY MORE FOR THE SKYLARK?
MOVE ALONG, MY LUCKY LADS!
AYE, WE'RE LUCKY ALL RIGHT! WHAT ABOUT THE LADS OF THE SECOND BATTALION, FIGHTING OFF THE JERRIES BACK THERE!

BEYOND THE HASTILY-MANNED PERIMETER DEFENCES OF DUNKIRK, FROM THE SEA AT MARDYCK TO THE SEA AT NIEUPORT, TINY BRITISH GARRISONS WERE STILL FIGHTING STUBBORNLY AT STOP POINTS ALMOST SURROUNDED BY THE ADVANCING GERMANS...
AAGH!
LE COQ ROUGE
BACK, BACK! THE MAD BRITISH ARE STILL HERE!
901

THESE SCATTERED HANDFULS OF BRAVE MEN, FIGHTING GRIMLY UNTIL THEY WERE WITHDRAWN OR KILLED, HELD UP A VICTORIOUS GERMAN ARMY AND MADE THE MIRACLE OF DUNKIRK POSSIBLE.
ALL RIGHT, MEN! 'B' COMPANY'S BEEN ORDERED TO WITHDRAW! YOU'LL MAKE YOUR OWN WAY BACK TO DUNKIRK INDEPENDENTLY!
YESSIR! BUT ME AND THE LADS WILL JUST SEE THESE PERISHERS OFF BEFORE WE GO!

SERGEANT CRAGG AND HIS THREE TOUGH PRIVATES OF 'B' COMPANY HAD DONE THEIR JOB. BEHIND THEM, A GERMAN ARMOURED COLUMN BIT ITS NAILS IN IMPOTENT FURY. AHEAD OF THEM, ACROSS THIRTY MILES OF ENEMY-INFESTED FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE, LAY THEIR ONE CHANCE OF FREEDOM...

THE MAJOR SAID WE WAS TO GO INDEPENDENTLY, SARGE!

THAT'S RIGHT, HERBERT CROSBY— INDEPENDENTLY UNDER ME! WE FOUR'LL STICK TOGETHER IF YOU WANT TO GET BACK TO DUNKIRK!

IT WAS NINE O'CLOCK ON THE MORNING OF MONDAY 27th MAY, 1940. EXHAUSTED, THE BRITISH ARMY WAS FIGHTING ITS WAY BACK TO THE BOMB-TORN FRENCH BEACHES. A STUBBORN BRITISH NAVY WAS SAILING IN TO RESCUE IT. THE TERRIBLE MIRACLE THAT WAS DUNKIRK HAD BEGUN IN EARNEST...

Chapter 2. MATCHBOX ARMADA

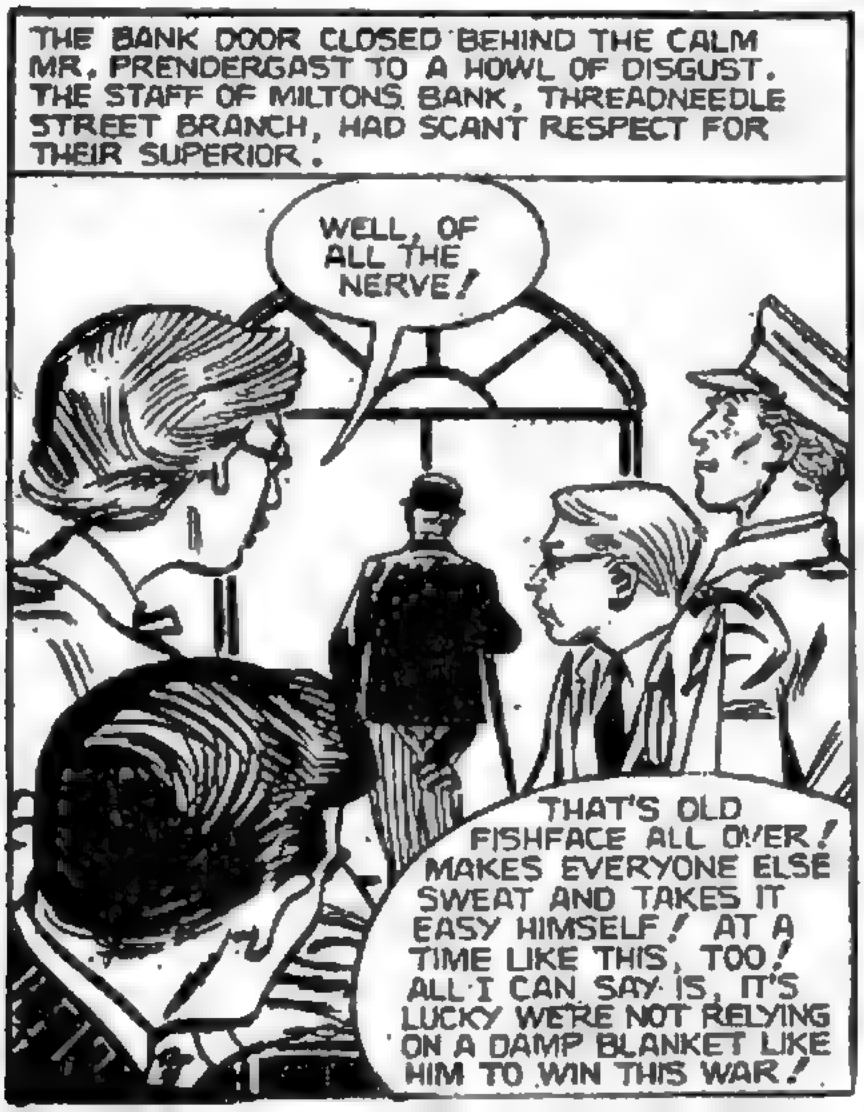
WITH A CHILLY FROWN, MR. PRENDERGAST OPENED THE DOOR OF HIS OFFICE. PEOPLE WERE BEHAVING VERY ODDLY THIS MORNING. IT WAS MOST UPSETTING. HE CLOSED HIS DOOR . .
THAT'S RIGHT, SCUTTLE BACK TO YOUR DESKS LIKE GOOD LITTLE RABBITS! THE BRITISH ARMY'S BEING SLASHED TO RIBBONS AT DUNKIRK, BUT OLD FISHFACE MUST HAVE HIS LEDGERS NEAT AND TIDY!
CHUCK IT, LEN! YOU WERE JUST AS SCARED OF HIM BEFORE YOU JOINED UP!
MANAGER
MORNING SUN
BACKS TO THE SEA
BEF
SMALL BOAT OWNERS CONTACTED BY ADMIRALTY

MR. PRENDERGAST'S BUZZER RANG PETULANTLY, BUT PRIVATE LEONARD SMITH OF THE BRITISH ARMY WAS ABOVE THAT SORT OF THING . . .
MAYBE I WAS, GORDON, BUT I'M NOT NOW! OLD FISHFACE PRENDERGAST HAS GOT RED INK IN HIS VEINS, NOT BLOOD! CRUMBS, WHEN I THINK I'VE GOT TO FIGHT FOR A WALKING CASHBOX LIKE HIM . . .
HE WANTS THE NEWSPAPER! PERHAPS I HAD BETTER SEE WHAT ALL THIS FUSS IS ABOUT, MISS TILLEY!' FUSS, HE CALLS IT!

THE SHUDDERING ECHO OF THE GUNS OVER DUNKIRK HAD SHAKEN EVEN PLACID THREADNEEDLE STREET ON THAT MOMENTOUS MONDAY MORNING. ONLY THE MANAGER OF MILTONS BANK SEEMED UNDISTURBED...
DEAR, DEAR, MOST DISTRESSING NEWS... BUT WORRYING ABOUT IT WON'T GET OUR WORK DONE, WILL IT, MISS TILLEY? BUSINESS AS USUAL, EH?
AS USUAL, MISTER PRENDERGAST!
MORNING SUN
BACKS TO THE SEA
B.E.F. REACHES DUN
SMALL BOAT OWN
CONTACTED BY AD

BUT MR. PRENDERGAST WAS RATHER MORE DISTURBED THAN HE APPEARED TO BE. WHEN MISS TILLEY HAD LEFT THE ROOM, SLAMMING THE DOOR BEHIND HER, HE LOOKED AT THE NEWSPAPER AGAIN...
REALLY, IT'S TOO BAD! THESE CIVIL SERVANTS ARE MOST INCOMPETENT! I SHALL CERTAINLY TAKE IT UP WITH THEM... WHEN I RETURN!
MAM

MR. PRENDERGAST HAD MADE UP HIS MIND QUITE CALMLY—AND QUITE CALMLY HE TOOK HIS BOWLER HAT AND UMBRELLA FROM THE HAT-STAND —
OH, MISS TILLEY, I HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE MY ANNUAL HOLIDAY THIS WEEK! I SHALL BE BACK NEXT MONDAY! TELL MISTER DOUGAN TO LOOK AFTER THINGS IN THE MEANTIME. WON'T YOU?
BUT, MISTER PRENDERGAST—


THE BANK DOOR CLOSED BEHIND THE CALM MR. PRENDERGAST TO A HOWL OF DISGUST. THE STAFF OF MILTONS BANK, THREADNEEDLE STREET BRANCH, HAD SCANT RESPECT FOR THEIR SUPERIOR.
WELL, OF ALL THE NERVE!
THAT'S OLD FISHFACE ALL OVER! MAKES EVERYONE ELSE SWEAT AND TAKES IT EASY HIMSELF! AT A TIME LIKE THIS, TOO! ALL I CAN SAY IS, IT'S LUCKY WE'RE NOT RELYING ON A DAMP BLANKET LIKE HIM TO WIN THIS WAR!

MR. PRENDERGAST SELDOM WORRIED ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT OF HIM. AND AT THIS MOMENT HIS MIND WAS VERY FAR FROM THREADNEEDLE STREET...
SEVEN TINS OF BAKED BEANS—TWO PACKETS OF TEA—DRIED EGG—BICARBONATE OF SODA, JUST IN CASE—

MR. PRENDERGAST HAD A TIDY MIND. IT WAS QUITE AT REST AN HOUR LATER WHEN HE ARRIVED AT HIS PLEASANT HOUSE IN THAMES DITTON...
WHY, DEAR! YOU'RE HOME EARLY FROM THE OFFICE!
YOU'VE SEEN THE NEWSPAPERS, MAUD! I SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE AT ALL IF THOSE SILLY ASSES AT THE ADMIRALTY HADN'T BUNGLED THINGS! NOW, WHERE IS HENRY? WE MUST BE OFF!
A FORTNIGHT BEFORE, THE ADMIRALTY HAD BROADCAST AN APPEAL FOR THE NAMES OF ALL OWNERS OF SEAWORTHY SMALL BOATS. MR. PRENDERGAST, PROUD OWNER OF A TWIN-SCREW THAMES MOTOR CRUISER, HAD ANSWERED IT. HE HAD NOT HEARD FROM WHITEHALL SINCE, BUT...
ARE YOU SURE YOU OUGHT TO GO WITHOUT AN INVITATION, DEAR?
YES, YES, MAUD! NOW DO RUN ALONG AND PACK THE PICNIC BASKET, THERE'S A GOOD GIRL! I MUST MAKE SURE HENRY HAS STOWED AWAY THAT PETROL HE GOT FROM HIS BLACKGUARD OF A BROTHER-IN-LAW!

THE SITUATION CALLED FOR SMALL BOATS AND CREWS TO MAN THEM. IT WAS NOT MR. PRENDERGAST'S FAULT THAT AN INCOMPETENT CLERK AT THE ADMIRALTY HAD OVERLOOKED HIS NAME. HE WENT IN SEARCH OF HENRY.

AH, THERE YOU ARE, HENRY! ALL READY FOR OUR LITTLE TRIP?

MISSUS TOLD ME! DAFT, I CALL IT, GALLIVANTING ABOUT ALL OVER THE OCEAN! BUT IF YOU'VE MADE UP YOUR MIND —

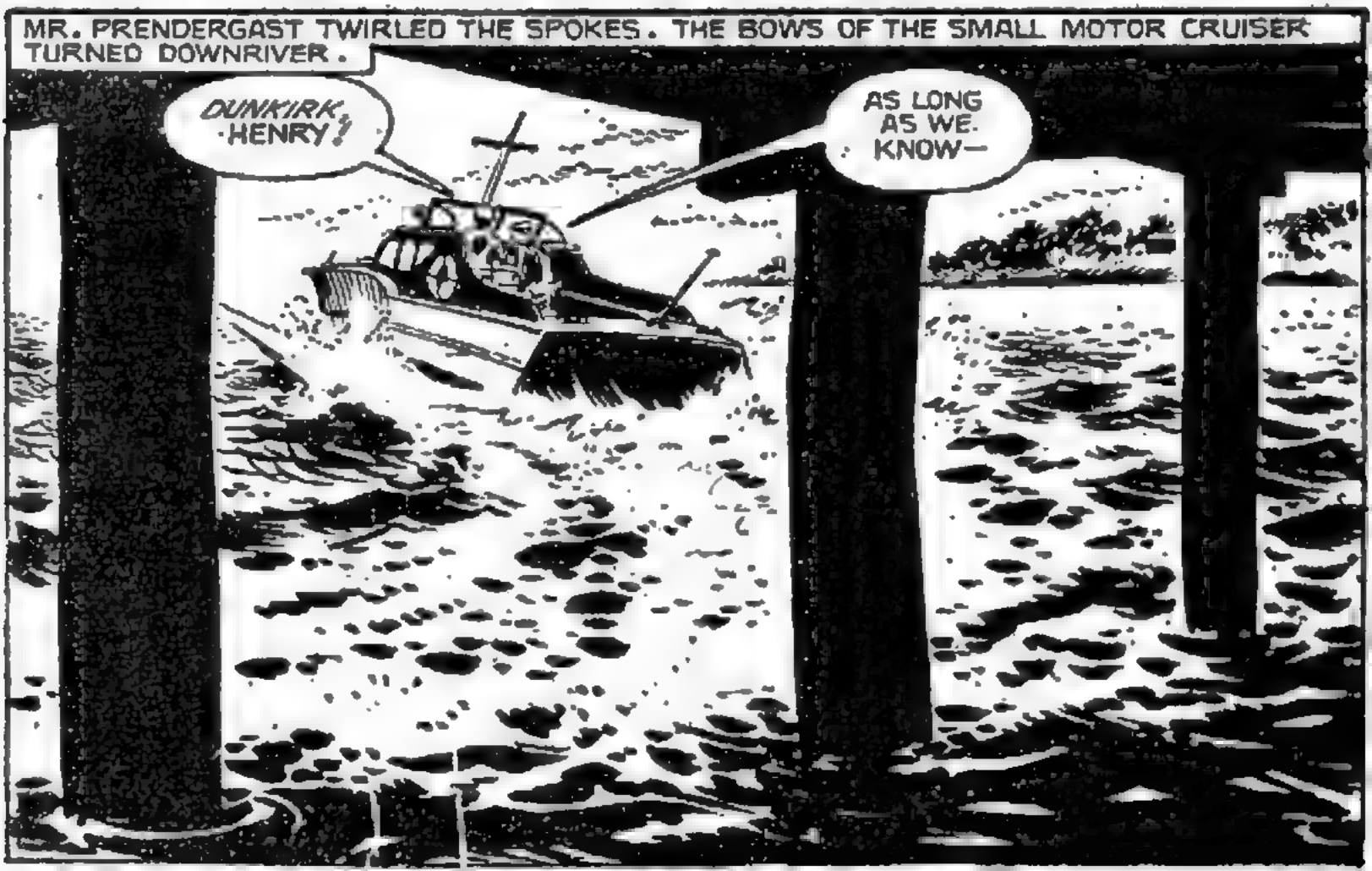
MAUD

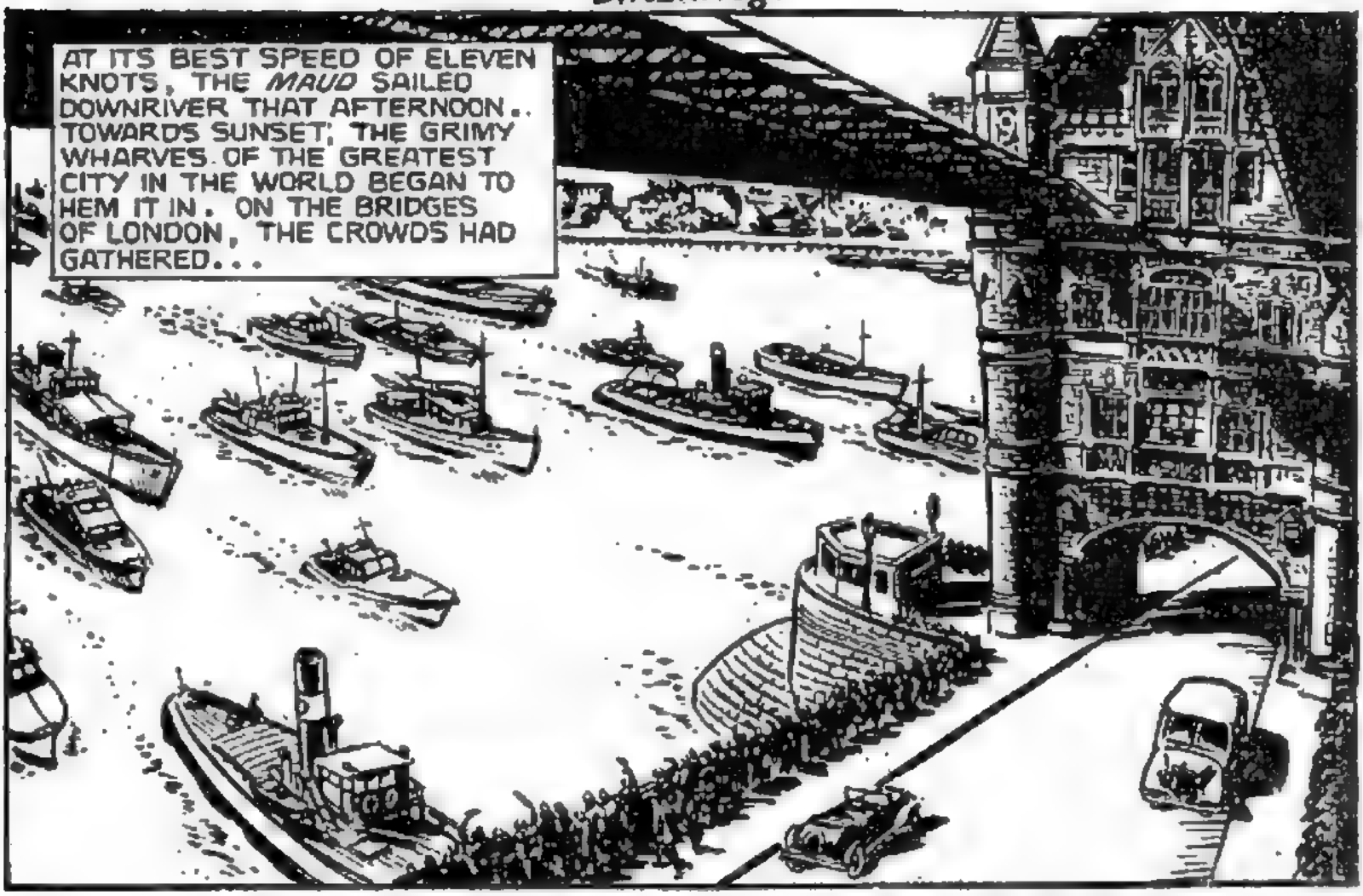
HENRY WAS MR. PRENDERGAST'S ODD-JOB MAN. HE HAD A SUSPICIOUS NATURE, A WAY WITH ROSES, AND A DEEP LOVE FOR THE OILY ENTRAILS OF THE BOAT WHICH MR. PRENDERGAST, WITH A CERTAIN LACK OF IMAGINATION, HAD NAMED *MAUD*.

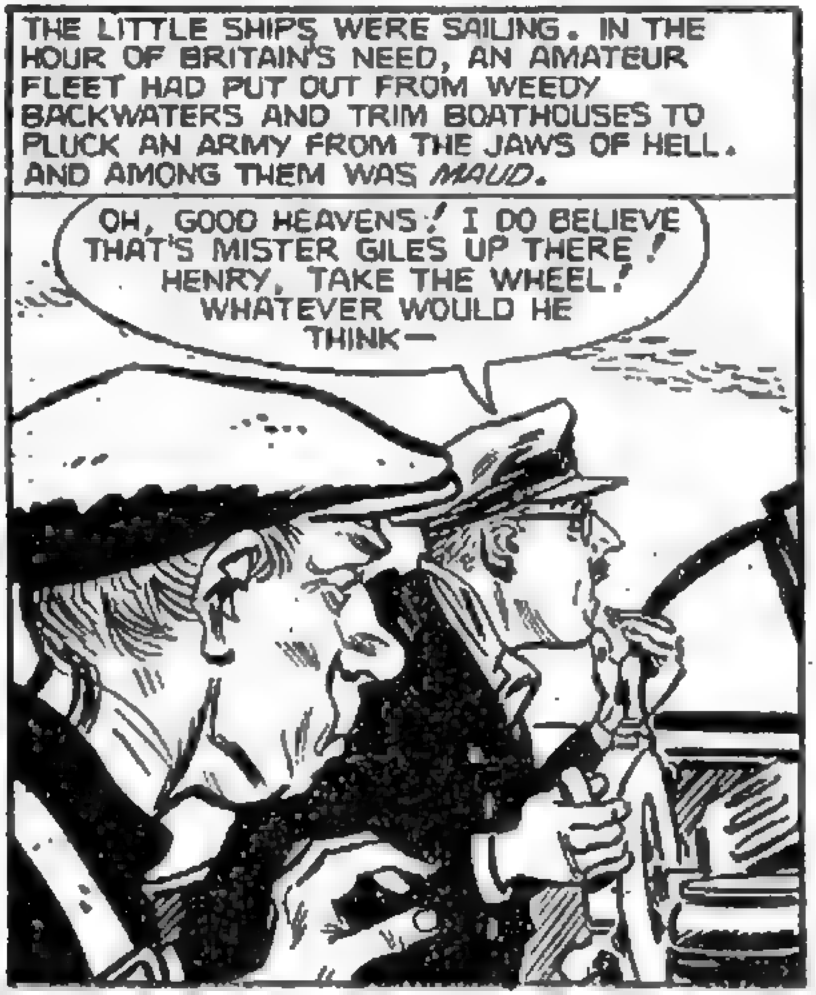
I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND, HENRY! START THE ENGINE, THERE'S A GOOD CHAP! WHAT WITH YOU AND MAUD, THE WHOLE JOLLY THING WILL BE OVER BEFORE WE GET THERE!

Blitzkrieg!

PROVISIONS STOWED ABOARD, BLACK-MARKET PETROL SWILLING IN ITS TANK, THE *MAUD* SURGED OUT AT LAST INTO THE BROAD RIVER THAMES WITH MR. PRENDERGAST AT THE WHEEL...
BYE-BYE, DEAR! DO REMEMBER TO TAKE OFF YOUR SOCKS IF THEY GET WET!
HERE, MISTER P! WHERE DID YOU SAY WE WAS GOING?


MR. PRENDERGAST TWIRLED THE SPOKES. THE BOWS OF THE SMALL MOTOR CRUISER TURNED DOWNRIVER.
DUNKIRK, HENRY!
AS LONG AS WE KNOW—


AT ITS BEST SPEED OF ELEVEN KNOTS, THE *MAUD* SAILED DOWNRIVER THAT AFTERNOON.. TOWARDS SUNSET, THE GRIMY WHARVES OF THE GREATEST CITY IN THE WORLD BEGAN TO HEM IT IN. ON THE BRIDGES OF LONDON, THE CROWDS HAD GATHERED...

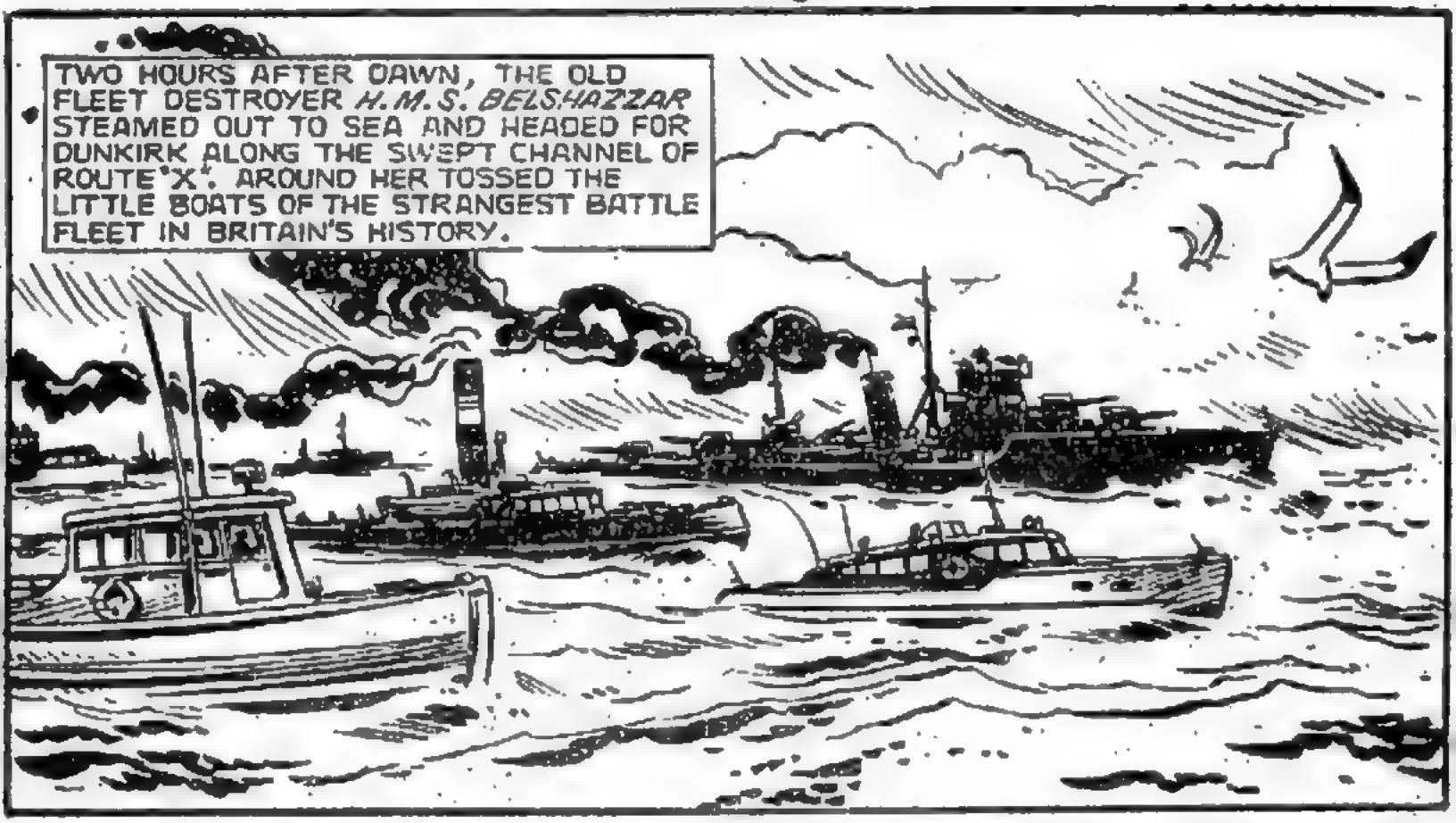

THE LITTLE SHIPS WERE SAILING. IN THE HOUR OF BRITAIN'S NEED, AN AMATEUR FLEET HAD PUT OUT FROM WEEDY BACKWATERS AND TRIM BOATHOUSES TO PLUCK AN ARMY FROM THE JAWS OF HELL. AND AMONG THEM WAS *MAUD*.
OH, GOOD HEAVENS! I DO BELIEVE THAT'S MISTER GILES UP THERE! HENRY, TAKE THE WHEEL! WHATEVER WOULD HE THINK—

THE HOLOCAUST OF DUNKIRK HELD NO TERRORS FOR MR. PRENDERGAST, BUT HIS REPUTATION AS A SOBER MAN OF BUSINESS IN THE CITY WAS ANOTHER MATTER...
THEY'RE BRAVE FELLOWS, MISTER GILES!
OH BRAVE, YES! BUT IMPULSIVE! NOT THE SORT OF CHAPS TO GO STEADY WITH A MAN'S BANK ACCOUNT, EH?

THE FATUOUS MR. GILES DWINDLED ASTERN. WITH A SIGH OF RELIEF, MR. PRENDERGAST TOOK OVER THE WHEEL AGAIN. WITH AS MUCH CARE AS HE GAVE TO THE MONTHLY BALANCE, HE STEERED THE MAUD INTO THE POOL OF LONDON...
WELL, THAT'S THE WORST OF IT OVER, HENRY! WE SHALL BE AT SHEERNESS BY DAWN!
AS A THREATENING DAWN CRIMSONED THE MUDFLATS OF KENT, THE LITTLE MOTOR CRUISER SLIPPED INTO THE NAVAL PORT OF SHEERNESS...
MOTOR CRUISER MAUD! PRENDERGAST IN COMMAND!
AHOY, THERE! WHO ARE YOU?
RN

THE SMALL VESSELS POOL OF THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING WAS ORGANIZING THE MASS OF LITTLE BOATS AS THEY STEAMED INTO THE CHANNEL PORTS EN ROUTE FOR THEIR APPOINTMENT WITH HISTORY. SO FAR, THE MAUD HAD ESCAPED THEIR ATTENTION...
MAUD? THERE'S NO MAUD DOWN HERE, SIR! NO PRENDERGAST EITHER, IF IT COMES TO THAT.
COME, COME, LIEUTENANT! I HAVEN'T ALL DAY TO WASTE! HOW THE ADMIRALTY EXPECTS TO WIN THIS WAR IF IT SHOWS SUCH INCOMPETENCE, I CAN'T THINK!

THE NAVAL LIEUTENANT WOULD HAVE BEEN NO MATCH FOR MR. PRENDERGAST AT THE BEST OF TIMES. AND HE HAD BEEN CHECKING HIS LIST ALL NIGHT...
OH WELL—I'M TOO FAGGED TO ARGUE, SIR! YOU CAN TACK YOURSELF ON TO THE CONVOY WHICH BELSHAZZAR IS TAKING ACROSS AT O-EIGHT-HUNDRED HOURS! HOW'S YOUR PETROL?
HENRY'S BROTHER-IN-LAW HAS GIVEN US ENOUGH TO GET US TO DUNKIRK, LIEUTENANT, THANK YOU! WE'LL WORRY ABOUT GETTING BACK LATER, EH? BELSHAZZAR, YOU SAID? GOOD DAY TO YOU!


TWO HOURS AFTER DAWN, THE OLD FLEET DESTROYER *H.M.S. BELSHAZZAR* STEAMED OUT TO SEA AND HEADED FOR DUNKIRK ALONG THE SWEPT CHANNEL OF ROUTE 'X'. AROUND HER TOSSED THE LITTLE BOATS OF THE STRANGEST BATTLE FLEET IN BRITAIN'S HISTORY.

THE *MAUD* WAS ONE OF THAT GALLANT COMPANY WHICH, SIX HOURS LATER, CLEARED THE RUYTINGEN SHALLOWS AND SIGHTED THE BLAZING INFERNO WHICH WAS TO BE THE SCENE OF THEIR MARTYRDOM—AND TRIUMPH.
MISSUS NEVER TOLD ME ABOUT THESE GOINGS ON!
DON'T GRUMBLE, HENRY! SOMEONE'S GOT TO DO THE JOB, HAVEN'T THEY? AND YOU DON'T THINK ANYONE'S GOING TO NOTICE THE *MAUD* IN ALL THIS EXCITEMENT, DO YOU?

BUT THERE, MR. PRENDERGAST WAS WRONG. AS THE MOTOR CRUISER HEADED IN TOWARDS THE BEACHES PAST THE HAMMERING OERLIKONS OF THE BELSHAZZAR...
BLIMEY! YOU'D THINK HE WAS GOING TO A REGATTA, WOULDN'T YOU?
TALK ABOUT FRED KARNO'S NAVY! BUT GOOD LUCK TO THE OLD JOSSER, ALL THE SAME!

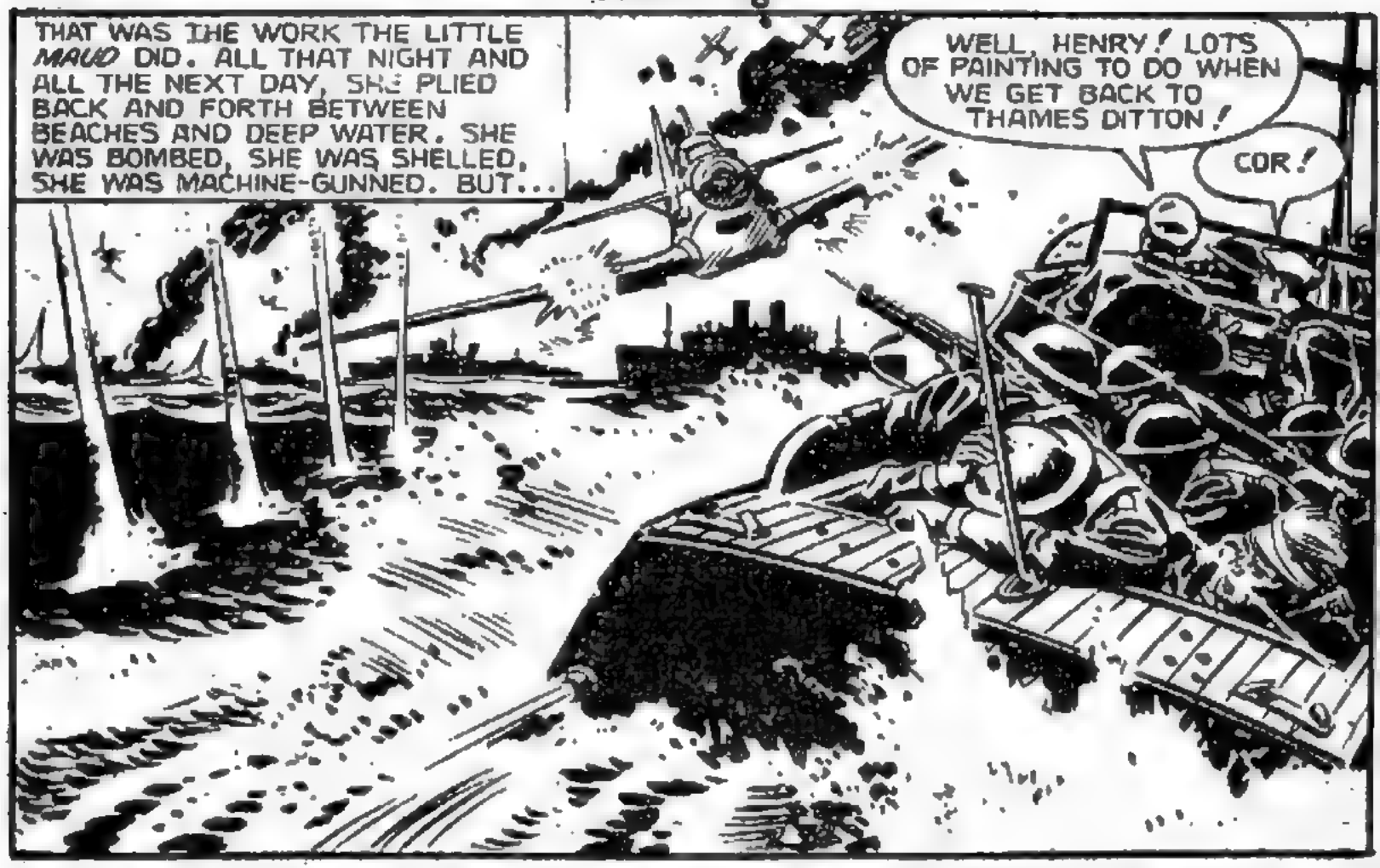
AND IT WAS NOT ONLY THE BRITISH NAVY WHICH TOOK NOTICE OF THE LITTLE MAUD. THE GERMAN LUFTWAFFE SHOWED A VENOMOUS INTEREST IN MR. PRENDERGAST AS HE NEARED THE BEACHES ON THAT FIRST RUN...
BUT IT IS A TOY BOAT, KURT! YOU WILL WASTE OUR BOMBS!
FOOL! IN SUCH TOY BOATS WILL THE BRITISH ARMY SLIP OUT OF OUR CLUTCHES! BOMBS ON!

AND THEN, AS THE STUKA DIVED VICIOUSLY ON ITS TINY ENEMY, THE BRITISH ARMY ITSELF TOOK HEARTFELT NOTICE OF THE MAUD...
SHE'S A GONER FOR SURE!
POOR LITTLE TUB!
WHAT ABOUT US, MATE—WE'LL BE HERE FOR THE REST OF THE WAR AT THIS RATE!

BUT AS THE BOMB-TORTURED WATER FELL BACK, A SMALL BOAT EMERGED FROM THE MAELSTROM WITH A SLIGHTLY UNTIDY BUT PERFECTLY COMPOSED MR. PRENDERGAST AT THE WHEEL.
DEAR, DEAR! QUITE AN EXHIBITION! NOW, HENRY, WE MUSTN'T KEEP THOSE POOR BOYS WAITING ANY LONGER!
COR!

THE *MAUD* HAD COME THROUGH ITS FIRST ORDEAL BY FIRE. ITS TINY DECK WAS TORN AND ITS NEAT PAINTWORK SCRATCHED, BUT TO A HANDFUL OF WEARY INFANTRYMEN IT WAS THE FINEST CRAFT THEY HAD EVER SEEN.
BLESS YOU, MATE!
NOT AT ALL, YOUNG MAN! UP YOU COME, NOW! SERGEANT, I'LL DEAL WITH THE MEN BACK THERE JUST AS SOON AS I CAN!
YESSIR! JUST AS YOU SAY, SIR!

THE TASK OF THE SMALL BOATS AT DUNKIRK WAS A VITAL ONE. WITH THE HARBOUR ALMOST BLOCKED, IT WAS THEY WHO CRUISED INTO THE SHALLOWS AND CARRIED THE EXHAUSTED SOLDIERS FROM THE OPEN BEACHES TO THE LARGER SHIPS STANDING OFF THE COAST.
BACK WE GO, HENRY! FULL SPEED AHEAD!


THAT WAS THE WORK THE LITTLE *MAUD* DID. ALL THAT NIGHT AND ALL THE NEXT DAY, SHE PLIED BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN BEACHES AND DEEP WATER. SHE WAS BOMBED, SHE WAS SHELLED, SHE WAS MACHINE-GUNNED. BUT...
WELL, HENRY! LOTS OF PAINTING TO DO WHEN WE GET BACK TO THAMES DITTON!
COR!

THROUGH ALL THOSE VIOLENT HOURS, THE *MAUD* CHUGGED DOGGEDLY ON WITH A GRUMBLING HENRY NURSING HIS BELOVED ENGINE, AND THE UNRUFFLED MR. PRENDERGAST AT THE HELM. AS NIGHT FELL...
ONE MORE TRIP, SIR, THEN YOU HAVE A REST! THAT'S AN ORDER FROM THE SKIPPER!
WELL, WELL, WE MUSTN'T HAVE A MUTINY, MUST WE? THOUGH I FEAR THOSE POOR BOYS ON THE BEACHES WON'T GET MUCH REST TONIGHT!

Chapter 3. FIRING SQUAD

THREE DAYS AGO, SERGEANT CRAGG AND HIS THREE TOUGH PRIVATES OF 'B' COMPANY HAD HELD UP AN ENTIRE NAZI PANZER COLUMN. AT LAST THEY HAD REACHED SAFETY THEMSELVES...
THERE YOU ARE, MEN! I TOLD YOU WE'D DO IT! DUNKIRK!
AND LOOK, SARGE — OUR OWN BOAT!

FOUR HARD PAIRS OF EYES FOCUSED GREEDILY ON THAT BOAT AS IT HEADED IN THROUGH THE SURF. AND AT THE WHEEL OF THE BOAT, FRESH AND SPRUCE AFTER A HOT BATH, A TIN OF BAKED BEANS AND A GOOD SLEEP, WAS MR. PRENDERGAST.
HEY, YOU THERE!
AH, SPLENDID! FOUR MORE OF OUR GOOD LADS TO BE PICKED UP! SLOW DOWN, HENRY!

SERGEANT CRAGG WAS A MAN OF FEW, AND MOST OF THEM LURID, WORDS... BUT NONE OF THEM FITTED HIS FEELINGS AT MEETING MR. PRENDERGAST FOR THE FIRST TIME....
GOOD MORNING, GENTLEMEN! WELCOME ABOARD THE *MAUD*! NOW, SERGEANT, IF YOU'LL GIVE ME YOUR HAND... COME, COME, DON'T BE NERVOUS!
LUMME!

THE FOUR HARDBITTEN INFANTRYMEN CLIMBED ABOARD THE *MAUD*. IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE BATTERED LITTLE MOTOR CRUISER HAD TURNED ITS BOWS TO THE SEA THAT THEY FOUND THEIR VOICES.
COR, WHAT A GEEZER! WHICH MUSEUM DID THEY DIG HIM OUT OF?
IF THEY'RE RELYING ON SOFTHEADS LIKE HIM, IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG WAR! STILL, HE'S GETTING US OUT OF A TOUGH SPOT!
YOU'RE TELLING US, SARGE...

MR. PRENDERGAST COULD NOT HEAR THE SOLDIERS' WORDS, BUT THE GRIM NOTE IN PRIVATE JOE FULLER'S VOICE MADE HIM RAISE HIS HEAD...
IF OLD CAIN HAD TAKEN YOUR ADVICE, SARGE, THE REST OF 'B' COMPANY'D BE HERE WITH US NOW!
WELL, HE DIDN'T! 'B' COMPANY'LL BE ABLE TO KICK ITSELF IN A JERRY PRISON CAMP FOR THE REST OF THE WAR!

SERGEANT CRAGG'S VOICE WAS ROUGH, BUT HIS FACE WAS GRIM. ABSTRACTEDLY, HE GLANCED AT THE MESSERSCHMITT FIGHTER WHICH AT THAT MOMENT SWERVED VENOMOUSLY IN TOWARDS THE MAUD.
WHAT'S THAT, SERGEANT? ARE THERE SOME FRIENDS OF YOURS IN TROUBLE?
YESSIR... GET RID OF THAT THING, YOU LOT, WHILE I EXPLAIN TO THE GENTLEMEN!

ABOVE THE INSANE CHATTER OF THE RIFLES AND BREN, SERGEANT CRAGG TOLD MR. PRENDERGAST ABOUT HIS MEETING WITH MAJOR CAIN AND THE PROBABLE FATE OF 'B' COMPANY.
YOU SEE, SIR, LAST NIGHT ME AND THE LADS MET MAJOR CAIN AND THE REST OF 'B' COMPANY TEN MILES BACK ALONG THE COAST. THEY WAS WAITING FOR A BOAT. I TOLD THE MAJOR HE WAS STILL BEHIND THE JERRY LINES, BUT HE WOULDN'T LISTEN TO ME!.
I SEE, SERGEANT! SO THEY'RE PROBABLY STILL THERE?

THE DEFIANT CROSSFIRE FROM THE RIFLES OF THE THREE PRIVATES HAD SMASHED THE MESSERSCHMITT'S GLYCOL TANK BEFORE ITS LETHAL MACHINE-GUNS COULD BEAR ON THE *MAUD*. BUT THE SERGEANT AND MR. PRENDERGAST WERE CONCERNED WITH MORE IMPORTANT THINGS . . .
YESSIR, THEY'RE STILL THERE — GOOD SHOOTING, LADS — UNLESS THE JERRIES HAVE ALREADY GRABBED THEM!
I SEE, I SEE!. MOST DISTRESSING FOR THEM! AND YOU SAY THEY'RE TEN MILES BACK ALONG THE COAST? WELL, NOW...

THE STRICKEN GERMAN FIGHTER PLUNGED INTO THE SEA ON THE PORT SIDE OF THE *MAUD*. BUT ALREADY THE COURSE OF THE BATTERED LITTLE BOAT WAS CHANGING . . .
THAT JERRY MUST HAVE PRANGED US! WE'RE TURNING BACK!
HEY, THE STEERING'S GONE . . .
CALM YOURSELVES, GENTLEMEN!

WITH SHOUTS OF ALARM, THE INFANTRYMEN SAW THE BEACHES OF DUNKIRK SWINGING ROUND IN FRONT OF THE *MAUD*'S BOWS. BUT MR. PRENDERGAST'S VOICE WAS QUITE SERENE . . .
CALM YOURSELVES, HE SAYS, AND THE RUDDER'S GONE FOR A BURTON . . .
OH BUT IT HASN'T, PRIVATE! I AM TURNING IT WITH THIS LITTLE WHEEL! YES, WE REALLY CAN'T LEAVE YOUR POOR FRIENDS TO THE TENDER MERCIES OF THE GERMANS—HUNS, WE USED TO CALL THEM IN *MY* WAR!

THE TOUGH SERGEANT CRAGG TURNED, EYES POPPING, ON MR. PRENDERGAST.
DO YOU MEAN TO SAY YOU'RE GOING BACK TO PICK UP 'B' COMPANY?
WHY CERTAINLY, SERGEANT! THAT IS THE JOB I CAME ALL THE WAY FROM THAMES DITTON TO DO!

THE THREE HARDBITTEN PRIVATES WERE SCANDALISED BY MR. PRENDERGAST'S PLAN...
GOING ASHORE AGAIN TEN MILES BEHIND THE JERRY LINES? NOT ME! HE'S BONKERS, THIS OLD GEEZER!
'ERE, STOP HIM, SARGE...
PACK IT IN, CAN'T YOU? DO YOU WANT HIM TO THINK WE'RE SCARED? ALL RIGHT, HE IS BONKERS, BUT WE'LL HAVE TO GO THROUGH WITH IT OR ADMIT HE'S TOUGHER THAN WE ARE!

SERGEANT CRAGG HAD HIS REPUTATION TO THINK OF... BUT AS THE *MAUD* SWUNG IN TOWARDS THE TREACHEROUS BEACHES OF DUNKIRK AGAIN, HE EYED THEM GINGERLY.
RIGHT, SIR! THIS LOOKS ABOUT FAR ENOUGH ... NOW, YOU LOT, STOP BINDING, PUT SOME ROUNDS UP THE SPOUT, AND FOLLOW ME!
GET READY TO SWITCH OFF, HENRY! I DO HOPE WE'RE IN TIME TO CATCH YOUR FRIENDS, SERGEANT!

THE LONG SANDY BEACH WAS QUIET... OMINOUSLY QUIET.
THERE'S NO SIGN OF THEM!
YOU'D BETTER POP OVER THE DUNES AND LOOK FOR THEM, SERGEANT! HENRY AND I WILL WAIT FOR YOU HERE! DON'T BE TOO LONG, WILL YOU?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, MATE!

GRIMLY, SERGEANT CRAGG AND HIS THREE TOUGH PRIVATES SPLASHED ASHORE. THE MAUD ROCKED GENTLY IN THE SHALLOWS.
COME ON THEN, YOU LOT! LET'S GET IT OVER WITH!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT, HENRY? I THINK I SHALL HAVE A LITTLE PADDLE! WHY DON'T YOU PUT A KETTLE ON FOR TEA?
HUH! SLOW DOWN... FULL SPEED AHEAD... PUT A KETTLE ON! TWO PAIRS OF HANDS, I'M SUPPOSED TO HAVE!

THE SUN SHONE. THE SEA SPARKLED. MR. PRENDERGAST FELT IN QUITE A HOLIDAY MOOD. BUT THE MAY OF 1940 WAS NO TIME TO TAKE A HOLIDAY ON THE BEACHES NEAR DUNKIRK...
AH, DELIGHTFUL! I REALLY THINK I HAVE EARNED A LITTLE PEACE AND QUIET AFTER ALL THAT EXCITEMENT!

THE GERMAN PATROL HAD HALTED IN GREEDY AMAZEMENT BEHIND A SAND DUNE THIRTY YARDS FROM THE PLACID MANAGER OF MILTONS BANK. THEN...
SEIZE HIM!
GOOD GRACIOUS ME!
PIG-DOG!

THE BRUTAL SUDDENNESS OF THE ATTACK TOOK MR. PRENDERGAST'S BREATH AWAY. A HEAVY FIST JARRED AGAINST HIS CHEEKBONE. WHEN HIS HEAD HAD CLEARED...
ACH! SO! THE HERR HAUPTMANN WILL BE MOST INTERESTED TO MEET YOU, MY ENGLISH FRIEND! TAKE HIM AWAY!
OH DEAR!

DRAGGED VICIOUSLY TO HIS FEET, MR. PRENDERGAST GLANCED BACK INVOLUNTARILY AT THE *MAUD*. THE BATTERED LITTLE BOAT LOOKED FORLORN AND EMPTY. THE FERRET-LIKE GERMAN OFFICER SNEERED—
DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF, ENGLISH SWINE! WE SHALL COME BACK TO COLLECT YOUR PITIFUL BOAT LATER! IT WILL MAKE EXCELLENT FIREWOOD!

EVEN AT THAT PERILOUS MOMENT, THE THOUGHTS OF THE PRACTICAL MR. PRENDERGAST WERE CONCERNED WITH THE OTHERS...
DEAR, DEAR, POOR HENRY WILL WONDER WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME! AND I NEVER HAD THAT CUP OF TEA! I DO HOPE HE MANAGES TO GET THE SOLDIERS AWAY SAFELY! HE ALWAYS WAS SO RECKLESS WITH THE WHEEL!

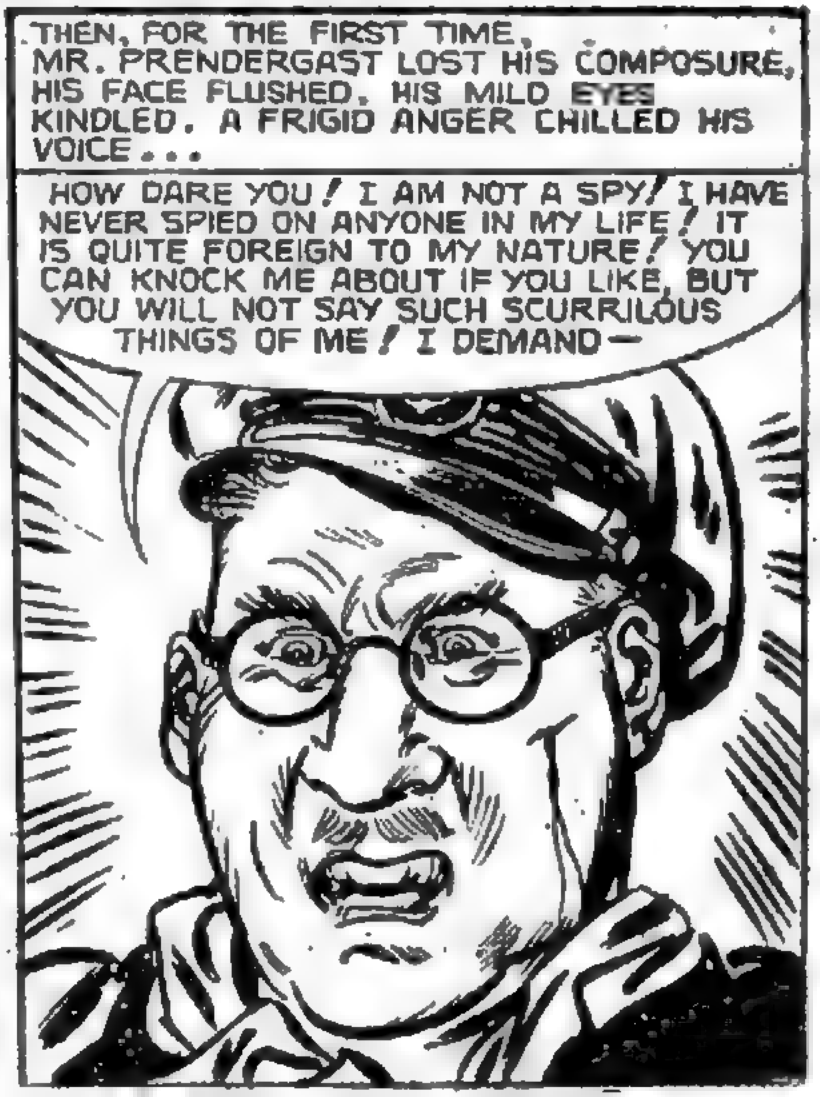
THE MURDEROUS FURY OF THE DUNKIRK BATTLE HAD AT LEAST BEEN IMPERSONAL. NOW MR. PRENDERGAST FACED THE BRUTAL SPITE OF THE BULLYING GERMAN ARMY ALONE AND IN PERSON...
TELL THE HERR HAUPTMANN I HAVE A PRISONER FOR HIM! ANOTHER OF THE ENGLISH SWINE!
JAWOHL, HERR LEUTNANT!
ANOTHER ONE, EH? I WONDER—

BUT MR. PRENDERGAST HAD NO INTENTION OF LETTING HIS MIND WANDER, EVEN AT THAT FRIGHTENING MOMENT. WERE THERE OTHER BRITISH PRISONERS IN THE CAPTURED FRENCH FARM ?
WE CAUGHT THE ENGLISH PIG ON THE BEACH, HERR-HAUPTMANN! FROM A SMALL BOAT HE HAD LANDED!
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, SCHMITT! NOW, SIR, YOU WILL GET UP OFF YOUR KNEES AND GIVE ME YOUR RANK AND UNIT!

PAINFULLY, MR. PRENDERGAST CLIMBED TO HIS FEET AND FACED HIS INTERROGATOR. HIS VOICE WAS CALM, FRIGID, ALMOST CONTEMPTUOUS...
VERY WELL, CAPTAIN! IF YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT, MY RANK IS MANAGER! MY UNIT IS MILTONS BANK, THREADNEEDLE STREET BRANCH! I AM, IN FACT, A CIVILIAN! I HOPE I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR ?
SO! YOU ARE A CIVILIAN! WHAT, THEN, IS THIS UNIFORM YOU WEAR ?

THE HAUPTMANN'S FLESHY FACE HAD DARKENED OMINOUSLY. HIS SHARP LITTLE EYES PROBED THE PRISONER'S TORN AND RAGGED YACHTING JACKET.
ANSWER ME, SCHWEINHUND! THIS INSIGNIA ON THE CAP — IT IS A SPECIAL CORPS YOU BELONG TO, HEIN?
I WOULDN'T SAY SPECIAL, CAPTAIN, THOUGH WE ARE RATHER PARTICULAR ABOUT WHO WE HAVE IN THE THAMES DITTON YACHTING AND BOATING CLUB!

LIKE MOST BULLIES, THE GERMAN OFFICER COULD NOT BEAR TO BE LAUGHED AT. VICIOUSLY HE STARED AT THE CALM MR. PRENDERGAST.
YOU JOKE THEN, HEIN? WELL, I WILL TELL YOU WHAT I THINK YOU ARE! I THINK YOU ARE A SPY!

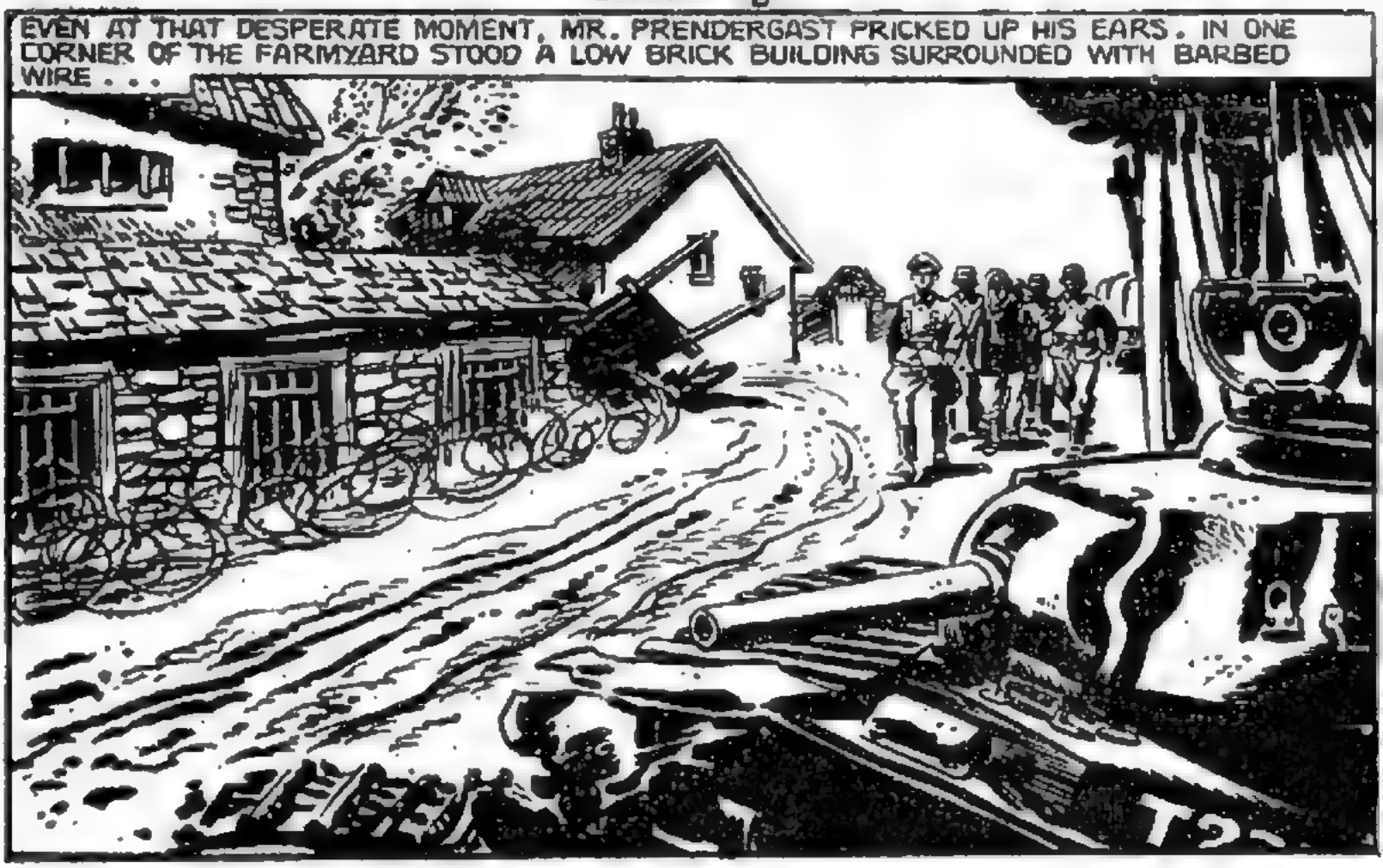

THEN, FOR THE FIRST TIME, MR. PRENDERGAST LOST HIS COMPOSURE, HIS FACE FLUSHED, HIS MILD EYES KINDLED. A FRIGID ANGER CHILLED HIS VOICE...
HOW DARE YOU! I AM NOT A SPY! I HAVE NEVER SPIED ON ANYONE IN MY LIFE! IT IS QUITE FOREIGN TO MY NATURE! YOU CAN KNOCK ME ABOUT IF YOU LIKE, BUT YOU WILL NOT SAY SUCH SCURRILOUS THINGS OF ME! I DEMAND —

ANGRILY, THE BRITISH BANK MANAGER AND THE GERMAN OFFICER GLOWERED AT EACH OTHER...
SILENCE! I SAY YOU ARE A SPY! YOU HAVE COME TO STAB IN THE BACK THE GLORIOUS GERMAN ARMY!
NONSENSE! I CAME TO DUNKIRK TO SAVE LIVES! ALTHOUGH UPON MY WORD, IF ALL THE OFFICERS IN THE GERMAN ARMY ARE SUCH BULLIES, I WISH I HAD ASKED FOR A GUN!

THE OTHER GERMANS IN THE ROOM HAD WATCHED THE EXCHANGE WITH BREATHLESS INTEREST. NOW THE FERRET-FACED LEUTNANT LICKED HIS THIN LIPS...
ENOUGH! MY PATIENCE IS EXHAUSTED. YOU ARE A SPY! AND THERE IS ONLY ONE PENALTY FOR A SPY—
JAWOHL, HERR HAUPTMANN! WITH PLEASURE!

HEAVY HANDS GRABBED MR. PRENDERGAST'S SHOULDERS. COARSE WORDS URGED HIM ACROSS THE ROOM. AND BEHIND HIM A SOFT VOICE GRATED IN HIS EAR...

MR. PRENDERGAST KNEW THEN WHAT HIS FATE WAS TO BE BUT HE WAS MUCH TOO ANGRY TO FEEL AFRAID. HEAD HELD HIGH, HE EMERGED INTO THE FARMYARD. AND AS THE LEUTNANT FOLLOWED —'.


EVEN AT THAT DESPERATE MOMENT, MR. PRENDERGAST PRICKED UP HIS EARS. IN ONE CORNER OF THE FARMYARD STOOD A LOW BRICK BUILDING SURROUNDED WITH BARBED WIRE . . .

SERGEANT CRAGG HAD BEEN RIGHT. THE SURVIVORS OF 'B' COMPANY AND THEIR VETERAN MAJOR HAD BEEN SURROUNDED AND TAKEN PRISONER BY THE ENEMY ON THE BEACH AT DAWN.
LOOK, MAJOR, IT'S A CIVVY, ISN'T IT?
YES, POOR DEVIL! I WONDER HOW HE GOT MIXED UP IN THIS SHOOTING WAR?
SILENCE THERE, ENGLISH SCUM!

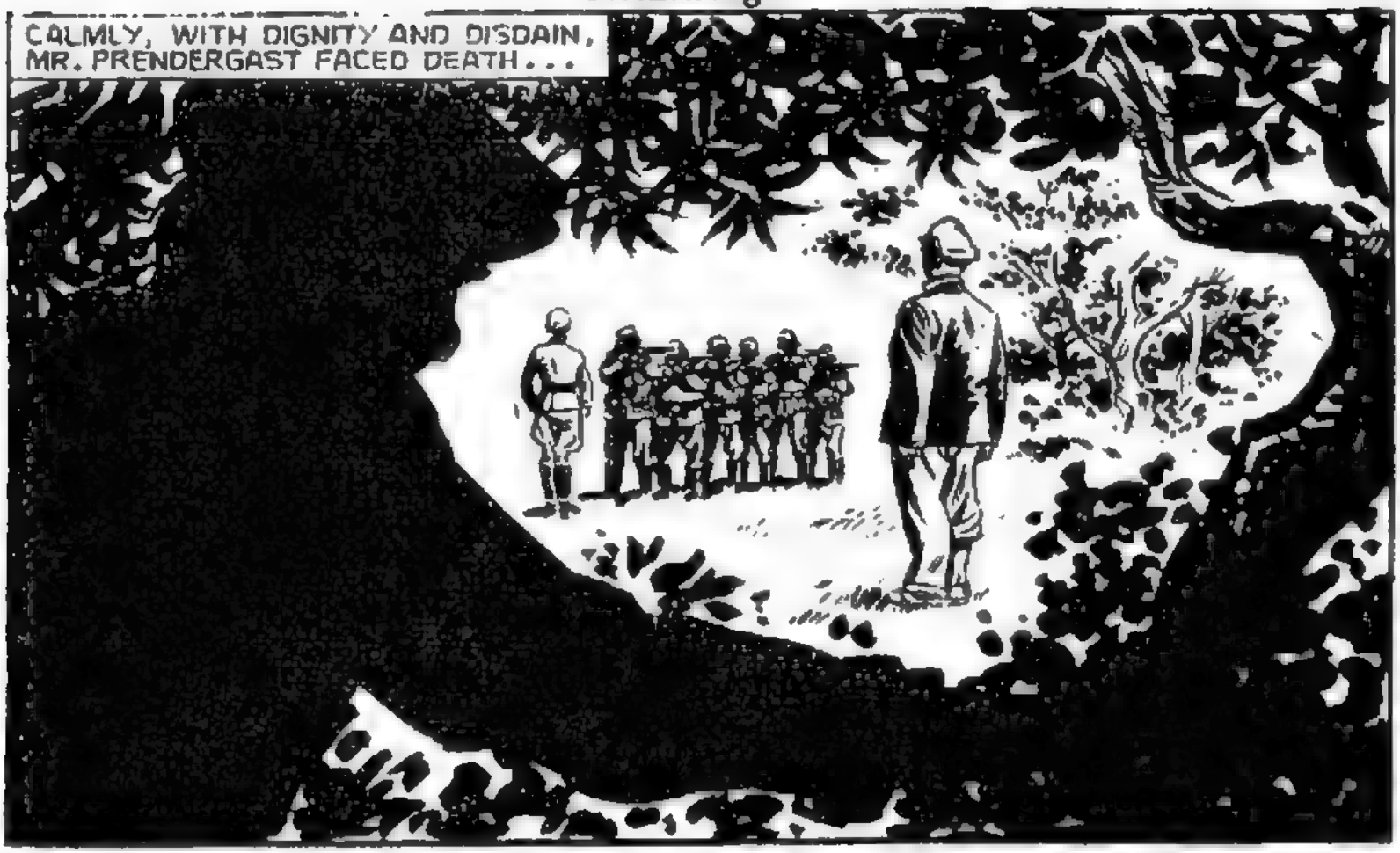
THE PITYING MAJOR CAIN WOULD HAVE BEEN SURPRISED IF HE COULD HAVE READ MR. PRENDERGAST'S THOUGHTS AT THAT MOMENT...
SO THIS IS WHERE THE SERGEANT'S FRIENDS ARE, POOR CHAPS! IF ONLY I COULD HAVE LET THE SERGEANT KNOW! IT REALLY IS MOST AGGRAVATING!

MR. PRENDERGAST WAS ANGRY. HE WAS ANGRIER THAN HE HAD EVER BEEN IN HIS LIFE BEFORE AND THE ANGER LEFT NO ROOM IN HIS TIDY MIND FOR FEAR. YET THAT WAS A MOMENT FOR FEAR...
THIS WILL DO, MEN! TIE HIS HANDS AND BLINDFOLD HIM!

THE GERMANS HAD TAKEN MR. PRENDERGAST TOWARDS A SMALL WOOD NEAR THE BEACH. THEY WERE NO LONGER A HANDFUL OF RATHER SLOVENLY RESERVE TROOPS. WHEN THE BANK MANAGER TURNED WITH HIS BACK TO THE TREES, IT WAS A FIRING SQUAD HE FACED.
YOU HAVE NO NEED TO TIE ME UP, LIEUTENANT! I SHALL NOT RUN AWAY!
AS YOU WILL! ONE ROUND, MEN! LOAD YOUR RIFLES!

IT HAD BEEN A LONG JOURNEY FROM THREADNEEDLE STREET TO THAT PATCH OF GRASS NEAR DUNKIRK, BUT MR. PRENDERGAST HAD MADE IT WITH NO REGRETS. HE HAD NO REGRETS THEN. HE WAS STILL TOO ANGRY.
TAKE AIM!

IT WAS MONSTROUS TO ACCUSE HIM OF BEING A SPY. MR. PRENDERGAST STRONGLY RESENTED IT. BUT AS HE WAS POWERLESS TO RETALIATE AGAINST THE GERMAN BULLIES, HE DID THE ONLY THING HE COULD DO IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES...


CALMLY, WITH DIGNITY AND DISDAIN, MR. PRENDERGAST FACED DEATH...

SIX RIFLES STEADIED. SIX MUZZLES POINTED AT MR. PRENDERGAST'S HEART. THE LEUTNANT LIFTED HIS HAND AND LICKED HIS THIN LIPS... AND AT THAT GRIM MOMENT...

THE LONG-SUFFERING HENRY WAS RATHER CROSS . . .
DOLTS! WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU?
SO THIS IS WHERE YOU GOT TO! IT'S A BIT MUCH! TELLING ME TO MAKE POTS OF TEA AND THEN WANDERING OFF ON YOUR OWN! SERVE YOU RIGHT IF IT'S STEWED—

AFTER BOILING THE KETTLE IN THE ENGINE ROOM OF THE MAUD, THE IRASCIBLE HENRY HAD COME ON DECK TO FIND THE BEACH EMPTY. AND NOW MR. PRENDERGAST SEEMED TO HAVE NO INTEREST IN THE TEA AFTER ALL...
QUICK, HENRY, QUICK!
HOY, HOLD ON...
SHOOT, YOU PIG-DOGS! THE PRISONER ESCAPES!

THE POTTERING HENRY HAD UNNERVED THE FIRING SQUAD. BY THE TIME THEY HAD SHOULDERED THEIR RIFLES AGAIN AND FIRED A RAGGED VOLLEY, THE PRISONER HAD REACHED THE SHELTER OF THE TREES.
DONNER UND BLITZEN! WHAT WILL THE HERR HAUPTMANN SAY! I AM DISGRACED!

PANTING WITH SUDDEN JOY AND EXCITEMENT, MR. PRENDERGAST PLUNGED INTO THE FRIENDLY DARKNESS OF THE WOOD...
'ERE, LOOK OUT, THE TEA'S SPILLING!
OH, BOTHER THE TEA! NO, NO, BLESS THE TEA, DEAR CHAP—BUT DO HURRY!

BEHIND MR. PRENDERGAST, THE SHOUTS AND THE LUMBERING FOOTSTEPS BEGAN TO DIE AWAY. IN FRONT OF HIM...
GOT YER...
OH-OH!
COR LUMME, HOLD ON, SARGE! IT'S THE OLD GEEZER!

SERGEANT CRAGG AND HIS THREE TOUGH PRIVATES HAD BEEN FRUITLESSLY SEARCHING THE DUNES FOR THE LAST HALF-HOUR. THE SERGEANT WAS RATHER CROSS...
YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? DON'T YOU KNOW THE PLACE IS LOUSY WITH JERRIES? HAVEN'T YOU CAUSED ENOUGH TROUBLE?
I'LL EXPLAIN MY PRESENCE HERE LATER, SERGEANT! I DO KNOW THE PLACE IS— AH—LOUSY WITH JERRIES. AND I ASSURE YOU I INTEND TO CAUSE A LOT MORE TROUBLE BEFORE I'M DONE!

EVER SINCE THE GERMAN OFFICER'S UNFAIR ACCUSATION IN THE FARMHOUSE, THERE HAD BEEN A NEW LIGHT IN MR. PRENDERGAST'S MILD EYES. IT WAS THE LIGHT OF BATTLE.
OH YOU DO, DO YOU? WELL YOUR JOB IS TO EVACUATE THE BRITISH ARMY FROM DUNKIRK -- SO GET CRACKING AND EVACUATE US!
ONE MOMENT, SERGEANT! YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOUR MAJOR CAIN AND 'B' COMPANY! WELL, I HAVE FOUND THEM!

SERGEANT CRAGG LOOKED NARROWLY AT THE CIVILIAN.
YOU HAVE? WHERE?
IN A FARMHOUSE BACK THERE! CLOSELY GUARDED BY WHAT APPEARS TO BE A QUANTITY OF GERMANS!
HERE, SARGE, LET'S GET OUT OF THIS...

THE THREE PRIVATES LOOKED AT EACH OTHER UNEASILY. A HOARSE SARCASM CREPT INTO SERGEANT CRAGG'S VOICE...
HO? AND I SUPPOSE YOU WANT US TO GO THERE AND ASK THE GERMANS TO LET US HAVE OUR PALS BACK, SO WE CAN ALL SAIL AWAY TOGETHER?
OH NO, SERGEANT! I FEAR THE GERMANS WOULD NOT BE REASONABLE! THEY HAVE A MOST UNPLEASANT CAPTAIN THERE...NO, I THINK WE SHALL HAVE TO USE FORCE!

ONCE AGAIN, FOUR TOUGH SOLDIERS STARED AGHAST AT THE CALM AND OBSTINATE FACE OF THE MIDDLE-AGED CIVILIAN.
COR! HE'S STARK RAVING NUTS!
LET'S GET BACK TO THE BOAT, SARGE... BEFORE HE ASKS US TO CAPTURE BERLIN!
SHUT UP, WILL YOU? I THOUGHT YOU LOT WERE TOUGH, I TOLD YOU BEFORE, IF THIS HERE CIVVY THINKS WE CAN DO SOMETHING... THEN WE'VE GOT TO DO IT!

Chapter 4. A SCORE TO SETTLE

THE SINGLE OMINOUS CRACK OF A RIFLE HAD GIVEN MR. PRENDERGAST THE DIRECTION HE NEEDED. HE HURRIED THROUGH THE WOOD. AT THE EDGE OF IT HE STUMBLED...AND PAUSED...
DEAR, DEAR! WELL, HE WON'T BE NEEDING THIS GUN ANY MORE...

THE LAST TIME MR. PRENDERGAST HAD HELD A RIFLE IN HIS HAND WAS IN 1917, AS A YOUNG PRIVATE IN THE ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS UNDER TRAINING. HE HAD NEVER FIRED A WEAPON IN ANGER...YET.
NOW IF I REMEMBER MY RIFLE DRILL, THIS BENT THING IS THE TRIGGER...

THERE IS ONE OF THE DEVILS! SHOOT HIM DOWN!

AS THE CROWD OF JACKBOOTED GERMANS CHARGED DOWN AT HIM, MR. PRENDERGAST TURNED TOWARDS THEM AND PRESSED THE BENT THING. HE HAD REMEMBERED HIS ARMS DRILL WELL...
AH, IT WORKS SPLENDIDLY!

THE ECHO OF MR. PRENDERGAST'S FIRST DEADLY BURST REACHED THE EARS OF SERGEANT CRAGG AND HIS MEN AS THEY WARILY APPROACHED THE FARMHOUSE...
SOMEONE'S BLAZING AWAY BACK THERE, SARGE! I HOPE THE OLD GEEZER'S NOT DOING ANYTHING SILLY!
STOW IT, HERB, AND KEEP YOUR EYES SKINNED!

MR. PRENDERGAST WAS NOT DOING ANYTHING SILLY. INDEED, HIS EFFORTS WITH THE AUTOMATIC RIFLE WERE MOST EFFECTIVE . . .
THERE! NOW WHICH WAY DID THE SERGEANT GO? AH . . .

TEMPORARILY ALONE, MR. PRENDERGAST ADVANCED WITH THE LIGHT OF BATTLE IN HIS EYES. BUT IT LOOKED AS THOUGH HE WOULD BE TOO LATE TO CATCH UP WITH THE SERGEANT . . .
THIS WAY!
SO! A RESCUE ATTEMPT! WAIT UNTIL I GIVE THE WORD, MEN!

THE GERMAN HAUPTMANN HAD HEARD THE SHOT WHICH KILLED HIS LEUTNANT, AND HAD WITHDRAWN HIS MEN TO AN AMBUSH OVERLOOKING THE FARMYARD. NOW HIS FAT CHEEKS GLISTENED WITH PLEASURE.
FIRE! FIRE!
BEHIND YOU, SARGE!
TURN AND FACE 'EM, THEN!

GRIMLY, SERGEANT CRAGG AND THE THREE TOUGH PRIVATES SETTLED DOWN TO FIGHT A BATTLE WHICH COULD HAVE ONLY ONE UNPLEASANT ENDING...
COR, THIS IS NICE, ISN'T IT? WHY ISN'T THE OLD GEEZER HERE TO SEE HOW TOUGH WE ARE?
SAVE YOUR BREATH, HERB CROSBY—YOU'LL NEED IT!

BULLETS WHINED ACROSS THE FARMYARD. ALREADY THREE GERMANS HAD CRUMPLED IN THE MUD. BUT THE WEIGHT OF NUMBERS WAS ON THEIR SIDE... IT COULD ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SERGEANT CRAGG AND HIS MEN WERE OVERPOWERED. UNLESS...
WELL, WELL! MORE OF THE SCOUNDRELS! JUST AS I HOPED...

MR. PRENDERGAST HAD BEEN ROUGHLY HANDLED. HE HAD BEEN CALLED A SPY. HE HAD VERY NEARLY BEEN IGNOMINIOUSLY SHOT. MR. PRENDERGAST WAS A MILD MAN, BUT HE WOULD NOT TOLERATE SUCH TREATMENT...

THE TRUTH WAS THAT THE MANAGER OF MILTONS BANK, THREADNEEDLE STREET BRANCH, WAS THOROUGHLY ENJOYING HIMSELF. ONLY THE GERMAN ARMY DID NOT SEEM TO APPRECIATE HIS ARRIVAL...
SNAKES ALIVE!
AAGH!
LUMME! TALK OF THE DEVIL...

CAUGHT BETWEEN THE BRITISH CROSSFIRE, THE GERMAN TROOPS CRUMPLED IN UNTIDY HEAPS. WITHOUT TAKING HIS DEADLY FINGER FROM THE TRIGGER, MR. PRENDERGAST HAILED THE SERGEANT.
HALLO, SERGEANT! YOUR FRIENDS ARE DOWN THE LANE BEHIND YOU! LEAVE ME TO DEAL WITH THESE SCOUNDRELS!
YOU HEARD THE GENTLEMAN, HERB! COME ON, LET'S GET THE MAJOR OUT! WE'RE LEAVING THE JERRIES IN BLOOMIN' GOOD HANDS, I RECKON!

IN THE FEW BRIEF HOURS HE HAD KNOWN MR. PRENDERGAST, SERGEANT CRAGG HAD SLOWLY LEARNED TO RESPECT THE MAN FROM THREADNEEDLE STREET. THE GERMAN HAUPTMANN'S ACQUAINTANCE WITH MR. PRENDERGAST WAS SHORTER... BUT HE WAS LEARNING FASTER...
AH, THE HERR HAUPTMANN WHO CALLED ME A SPY!
OUT OF MY WAY, PIGS! ACH!

INEXORABLY MR. PRENDERGAST ADVANCED... AND BEHIND HIM IN THE MUDDY LANE LEADING TO THE PIGSTIES AND THE BARBED WIRE...
THERE THEY ARE, SARGE!
MAJOR, MAJOR!
IT'S YOU, SERGEANT CRAGG... THANK HEAVENS...

WITH A SHOT FROM HIS RIFLE, SERGEANT CRAGG BLEW THE PADLOCK FROM THE GATE OF THE PIGSTY. IN A SINGLE DELIRIOUS MOMENT, HE WAS SURROUNDED BY THE JUBILANT SURVIVORS OF 'B' COMPANY.
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE SO GLAD TO SEE THE SARGE!
GOOD SHOW, SERGEANT!
DON'T THANK ME, MAJOR! IT'S SOMEONE ELSE YOU'VE GOT TO THANK— BUT YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT IF I TOLD YOU, SO LET'S GET DOWN TO THE BEACH QUICK!

LED BY THE BURLY SERGEANT, THE WEARY REMNANTS OF 'B' COMPANY HOBBLED THROUGH THE WOOD TO THE BEACH AND THE GENTLY TOSSING *MAUD*. BUT THE SKIPPER OF THE *MAUD* HAD NOT YET ARRIVED.
WHERE IS HE?
DON'T ASK US, SARGE! LAST WE SAW OF HIM HE WAS GOING AFTER THE JERRIES LIKE A BAT OUT OF HELL! COR, WHAT A MAN!
WHO ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SERGEANT?

SERGEANT CRAGG WAS STILL FUMBLING FOR THE RIGHT WORDS TO DESCRIBE MR. PRENDERGAST, WHEN HERB INTERRUPTED HIM.
THE BLOKE WHO OWNS THIS BOAT, SIR! HE'S A... WELL, HE'S... HE'S A HOLY BLINKING TERROR, SIR, THAT'S WHAT HE IS!
SARGE — *LOOK!*

THE HOLY BLINKING TERROR HIMSELF HAD APPEARED... AND AT THE POINT OF HIS GUN QUAKED A FAT AND FRIGHTENED CAPTAIN OF THE WEHRMACHT.
AH, THERE YOU ARE, SERGEANT! AND YOUR FRIENDS! I DO APOLOGISE FOR KEEPING YOU WAITING, BUT I THOUGHT I'D COLLECT A PRISONER! A SPY, I BELIEVE...
NEIN, NEIN! NO SPY I AM! HELP!
'I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN, SERGEANT!
THE FIERCE LIGHT WHICH HAD BURNED IN MR. PRENDERGAST'S EYE WAS MILDER NOW. THE QUAVERING VOICE OF HIS PRISONER HAD APPEASED THE TIGER OF THREADNEEDLE STREET.
GET ABOARD THEN, 'B' COMPANY!
YOU HAVEN'T GOT ANY MORE BRIGHT IDEAS, SIR, 'AVE YOU ? LIKE COLLECTING LITTLE OLD ADOLF FROM BERCHTESGADEN ?
NO, NO, PRIVATE! WE MUSTN'T BE FOOLHARDY, MUST WE ?

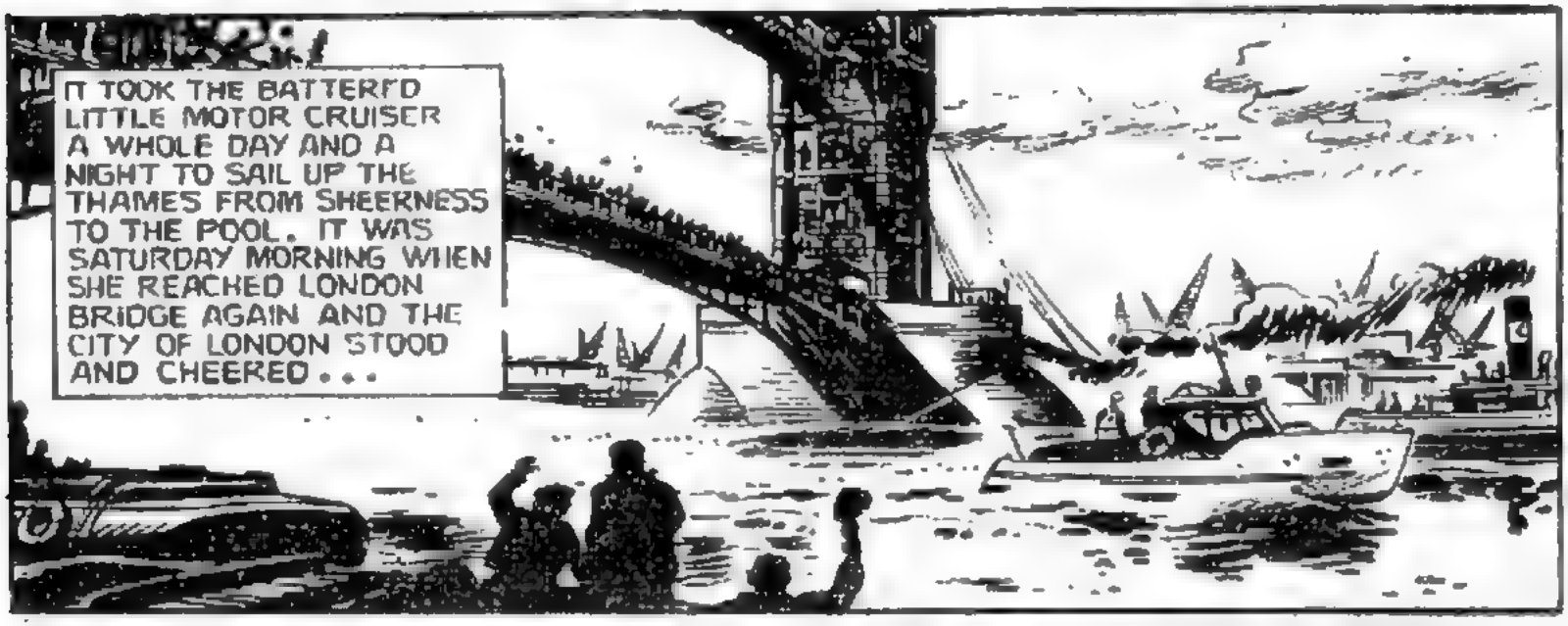
WITH A COUGH AND A SPLUTTER, THE MAUD'S ENGINE SPRANG RELUCTANTLY TO LIFE. BAKER COMPANY HAD ESCAPED FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH TO FIGHT AGAIN...
I THINK I HAD BETTER TAKE YOU ALL BACK TO BLIGHTY, SERGEANT! SO MUCH MORE SATISFACTORY! FULL SPEED AHEAD, HENRY!
FULL SPEED AHEAD, HE SAYS! WITH 'ALF THE BRITISH ARMY ABOARD!

THE MEN OF 'B' COMPANY, PERCHED HAPPILY ON THE ROOF OF THE CABIN, EYED MR. PRENDERGAST WITH AMUSEMENT. BUT BY NOW, THE FAT GERMAN HAUPTMANN SHARED SERGEANT CRAGG'S RESPECT FOR THE SKIPPER OF THE MAUD.
FUNNY OLD GEEZER, AIN'T HE?.
COME ON, FRITZ, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
GEEZER? THAT IS A SPECIAL KIND OF ENGLISH SOLDIER WITH THIS CURIOUS UNIFORM, HEIN? THEN I THINK IT IS THESE FORMIDABLE GEEZERS WHO WILL WIN THIS WAR FOR YOU, ACCURSED ENGLANDER!

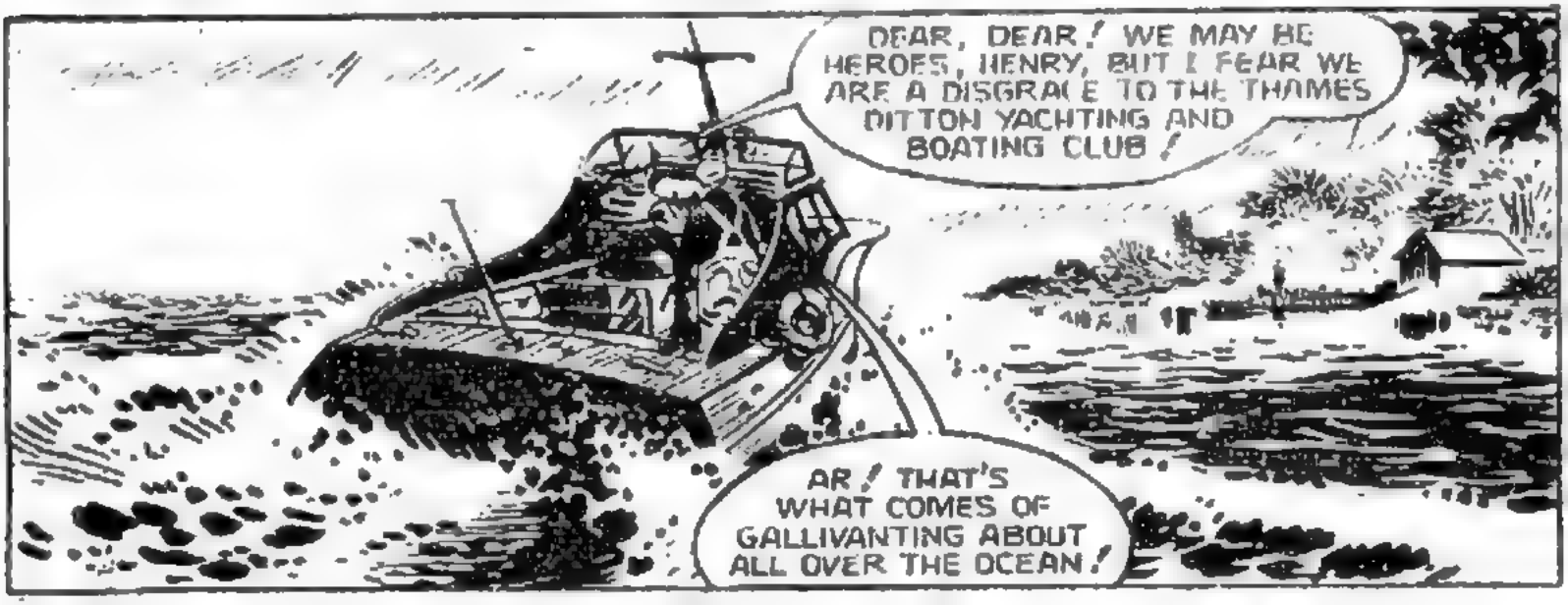
SO, ON THE LURID EVENING OF THURSDAY, 30th MAY 1940, ANOTHER LITTLE SHIP LEFT THE BEACHES OF DUNKIRK — THE BEACHES WHICH MIGHT HAVE MARKED THE BLOODY END OF A WAR AND INSTEAD MARKED THE FIERCE BEGINNING.
MAUD

ALL THROUGH THAT NIGHT, THE LITTLE *MAUD* CHUGGED ACROSS THE CHANNEL IN THE BRAVE COMPANY OF THE SMALL BOATS WHICH HAD BROUGHT AN ARMY BACK. AND AS DAWN BROKE...
WE MADE IT!
GOOD OLD *MAUD*!
SLOW DOWN, HENRY!

WITHOUT ANY FUSS, THE *MAUD* CAME ALONGSIDE THE JETTY AND DISEMBARKED HER WEARY PASSENGERS. THIS WAS THE QUIET BUT EFFECTIVE END OF AN EPIC...
I AIN'T GOOD AT SPEECHES, SIR, BUT YOU KNOW WHAT WE ALL FEEL! ANYWAY, THAT PRISONER YOU CAUGHT HAS SAID IT FOR US! IT'S GEEZERS LIKE YOU WHO'LL WIN THIS WAR FOR ENGLAND!
TUT, TUT, SERGEANT!



LIKE A HUNDRED OTHER ANONYMOUS CIVILIANS FROM THE BACKWATERS OF BRITAIN, MR. PRENDERGAST HAD WORKED A MIRACLE THAT WOULD RESOUND THROUGH HISTORY. BUT MR. PRENDERGAST WAS A VERY ORDINARY MAN...



THE MAUD HAD SAILED TO HELL... AND COME BACK AGAIN TO THAMES DITTON...
YOU MUST BE TIRED, DEAR!
A NICE HOT BATH, MAUD, AND I SHALL BE AS RIGHT AS RAIN! BUT DO YOU KNOW... I QUITE ENJOYED MYSELF!

MR. PRENDERGAST HAD HIS NICE HOT BATH. SUNDAY HE SPENT IN A DECK-CHAIR IN THE GARDEN. ON MONDAY MORNING HE CAUGHT THE EIGHT-FIFTEEN TO THE CITY...
WELL, THEY'VE GOT THE ARMY BACK TO ENGLAND! THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND MEN!
WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL! AND ALL IN THOSE TINY LITTLE BOATS! IT'S NO GOOD TELLING ME THE CHAPS WHO SAILED THEM ARE ORDINARY FOLK LIKE YOU AND ME — THEY'RE SUPERMEN!

MR. PRENDERGAST WAS STILL SMILING WHEN HE REACHED THE THREADNEEDLE STREET BRANCH OF MILTONS BANK . . .
GOOD MORNING, GOOD MORNING!
GOOD MORNING, MR. PRENDERGAST! I HOPE YOU HAD A NICE HOLIDAY!

MR. PRENDERGAST PAUSED. HE LOOKED THOUGHTFULLY AT HIS SECRETARY, BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER AT THAT MOMENT HE SAW HER. MR. PRENDERGAST WAS LOOKING AT A PALL OF SMOKE OVER A BATTERED BEACH, THE GAPING MUZZLES OF SIX GERMAN RIFLES . . .
NICE, MISS TILLEY? WELL, PERHAPS THAT IS HARDLY THE WORD . . . STIMULATING WOULD POSSIBLY DESCRIBE IT BETTER! WELL, WELL, NOSE TO THE GRINDSTONE AGAIN, EH?
MANAGER

MR. PRENDERGAST'S DOOR CLOSED BEHIND HIM. THE STAFF OF MILTONS BANK, THREADNEEDLE STREET BRANCH, SETTLED BACK TO ITS WORK. AND PRIVATE LEN SMITH, OF THE BRITISH ARMY, SQUARED HIS THIN SHOULDERS.

HUH, TRUST OLD FISHFACE TO LOOK AFTER HIMSELF! HE DOESN'T KNOW THERE'S A WAR ON! WELL, I'M OFF! SOMEONE'S GOT TO GET ON WITH FIGHTING THE WAR!

ALONE IN HIS ROOM, MR. PRENDERGAST ALSO SQUARED HIS SHOULDERS. BUT THEY WERE STRAIGHTER SHOULDERS THAN PRIVATE LEN SMITH'S. AND PERHAPS THEY HAD A RIGHT TO BE...

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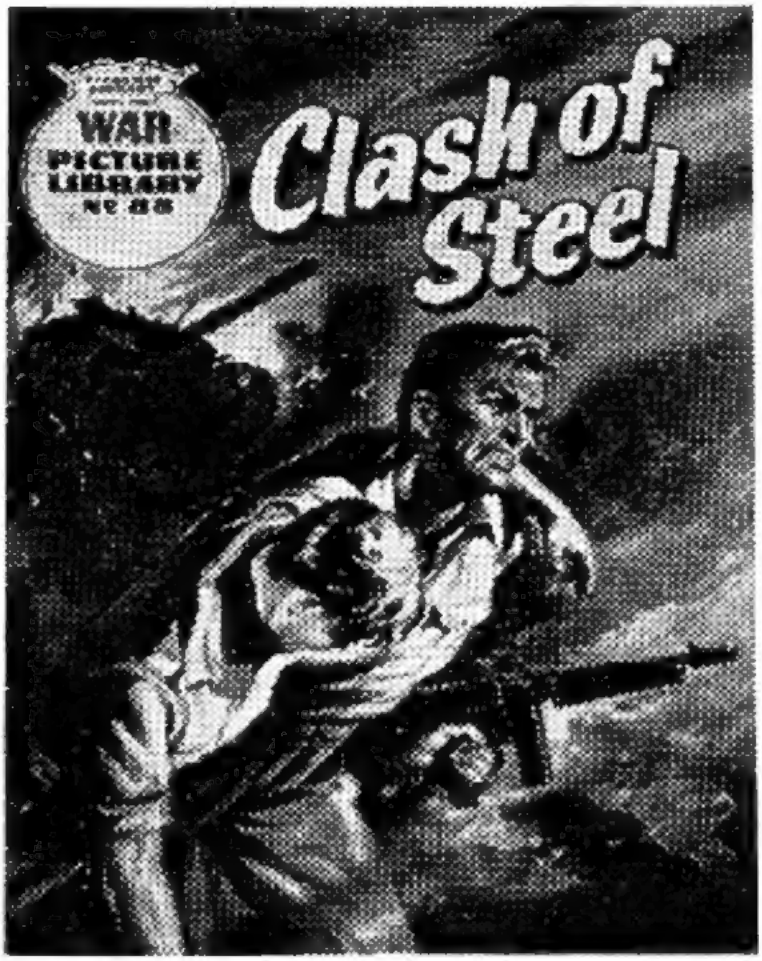

The tank carried a terrible punch but one accurate enemy shot could turn it instantly into a steel coffin for its crew.

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The crews of the mighty bomber fleets of the R.A.F. lived on borrowed time, for their lives in action were measured in seconds.

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